



USAID Avian Influenza Program

Key Messages on Prevention and Control of Animal-to-Human Transmission of Avian Influenza

Avian influenza can spread to humans and has the potential to make you very sick or even kill you. The easiest ways to avoid getting avian influenza are to avoid touching poultry or their droppings; washing hands with ash or soap and water immediately before and after having contact with poultry; and cooking poultry and eggs thoroughly before eating. Following is some more specific information.

Practice overall good hygiene.

- Wash hands with soap and water or ash before and after handling food.
- Wear a mask when cleaning or sweeping your farmyard.
- Use other protective equipment if you have contact with poultry or other birds.
- If practical, change your clothing once you arrive at the workplace, especially if you have poultry in your backyard or come in contact with poultry on your way to work.

Avoid close contact with birds.

- If poultry have to be kept indoors, keep them in a specific area away from where the family sleeps and eats.
- Do not let poultry in your house.
- If possible, keep children away from birds and collecting eggs. This includes pet birds if they are not exclusively kept indoors.

If you come across any dead or sick birds, do not touch them unless you are wearing gloves.

- Report sick or dead birds immediately to the authorities.
- All kinds of birds can get avian flu – chickens, ducks, geese, quails, turkeys, pigeons, wild birds, and even pet birds.
- Some birds such as ducks can be infected even when they don't look sick.
- If you become sick after contact with dead or sick birds, seek immediate treatment.

Ensure that poultry meat and eggs are thoroughly cooked.

- Conventional cooking (temperatures at or above 70°C in all parts of a food item) will kill the avian influenza virus.
- The avian influenza virus, if present in poultry meat, is not killed by refrigeration or freezing.
- Do not eat runny eggs or poultry meat that is not well cooked and do not consume raw duck blood.
- Raw eggs should not be used in foods that will not be cooked.
- Eggs can contain avian influenza virus both on the outside (shell) and the inside (whites and yolk), so it is important to wash hands after handling eggs, in addition to cooking the eggs thoroughly.

Do not slaughter or prepare sick or dead poultry for food.

- The greatest risk of exposure to avian influenza is through the handling and slaughter of live infected poultry.
- Good hygiene practices are essential during slaughter and post-slaughter handling to prevent exposure via raw poultry meat or cross-contamination from poultry to other foods, food preparation surfaces, or equipment.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other foods.
- After cutting raw meats, wash hands, cutting board, knife, and counter tops with hot soapy water. Use bleach if available.

Take precautions if you are visiting farms or other areas where poultry are kept.

- When visiting a farm or entering a yard where poultry is kept, wash hands with ash or soap and water before entering and after leaving.
- Brush and disinfect clothing, shoes/sandals, and the wheels of bikes/motorcycles/etc., after leaving, especially before going indoors.

If you unintentionally come into contact with poultry in an affected area (such as touching a bird's body or its feces, or walking on soil contaminated with poultry feces):

- Wash your hands well with soap and water or ash after each contact.
- Remove your shoes outside the house and clean them of all dirt.
- If you develop a high temperature, visit a doctor or the nearest health care facility immediately.

Farmers/Poultry Industry

If you are a farmer or have contact with poultry or other birds in your yard or community, there are many ways to help keep avian influenza away from yourself and your family (in addition to the basic precautions mentioned above). Here are some of the additional ways to protect yourself against avian influenza:

Regularly clean the areas where poultry are kept.

- Clean or sweep feces and unconsumed feed from the yard every day. Wear a mask while sweeping the farmyard.
- Burn or bury feathers and other waste away from the farmyard. Bury waste deep and with lime so that scavengers do not dig it up.
- Allow manure to decompose for several weeks to allow any virus to die before using the manure as fertilizer.
- Clean small farm equipment daily.

Don't bring contamination from other poultry farms or markets.

- Make sure you brush or wash off your shoes and the wheels of your bicycle/motorcycle if you visit farms or poultry markets so you don't carry the virus home on your clothing or shoes.
- Do not buy or accept any animals, eggs, or manure from other farms.

Protect yourself and your family.

- Keep children away from birds and collecting eggs if possible. This includes pet birds if they are not exclusively kept indoors.
- If birds have to be kept indoors, then keep them in a specific area away from where the family sleeps and eats.
- Do not keep birds as pets.
- Make sure you and your family always wash and brush your shoes and sandals when leaving the farmyard, especially before going indoors.

If you come across any dead or sick birds, do not touch them.

- Contact the proper authorities in your area immediately.
- Dead birds should not be thrown in a river, pond, or other body of water.
- Dead birds should be placed in a bag or other container away from other animals until the authorities can inspect the situation.
- If you see one or more birds that look sick, don't leave them in the yard. Take them out of the flock using gloves and place them in a closed cage. Then contact the paravet (or other authorities) immediately.

Workers involved in culling operations should protect themselves.

- Because of the high risk of exposure during the culling process, workers who might be exposed to infected poultry should wear proper personal protective equipment such as protective clothing, masks, goggles, and gloves.
- Cullers should follow a decontamination procedure when taking off their protective equipment.
- Workers involved in mass culling operations, transportation, and burial/incineration of carcasses should be vaccinated with the current human influenza vaccine (to avoid co-infection with avian and human strains of influenza).
- Individuals exposed to infected poultry or farms should be monitored closely by local health authorities.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and vehicles (including tires and undercarriage) entering and leaving the farm.
- Do not loan or borrow equipment or vehicles to or from other farms.